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NEWS

FROM YOUR MUSEUM

THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Know your Museum better

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MAKE DO—DO WITHOUT

A Lesson from the Pioneers

Mr. Donald Gordon of the War Times Prices and Trades Board warns us that even though the war situation looks brighter, we must still curb our spending and do without. To our forefathers this was an art that needed no war to instill. Here is a description of furniture given by a pioneer himself: "A bedstead, roughly hewn out with a felling-axe, the sides, posts and ends held together in screeching trepidation by strips of basswood bark; . . . a table that might be taken for a victualler's chopping block; four or five benches of the same rude mechanism."

And what of the house into which they put such furniture? It was made of logs fourteen to sixteen feet long, notched at the corners sufficiently deeply to hold firm and not leave too much space between to be filled with mud and moss or wedge-shaped bits of wood. In one of these four walls a doorway was cut in which they could hang a blanket, if they had one, or an animal skin. As for the roof—this might be made of elm bark. Since they had no nails, the pieces of bark were tied with withes to pole-rafters.

Don't run away with the idea that the pioneers were content with this rugged discomfort. One of the housewife's greatest ambitions was to possess an iron cooking-stove so that she could give up cooking at the open fireplace. The smoke, by the way, might go forth through a hole in the roof, that is, if they had no clay or stone to make a fireplace with chimney. And what did they use for sweeping the floor? A cedar or hemlock broom made by tying a flat bundle of boughs to a handle and trimmed broom-shape with an axe; or for stronger work, such as cleaning the rough wooden floor, they made a splint broom of green hickory, splintering one end with a knife.

If you are interested in seeing how the sturdy pioneers began life in Ontario and how they gradually progressed and added to their comforts by their own efforts, see the models illustrating Pioneer Life now in the Royal Ontario Museum.

MUSEUM REPORTS ON ONTARIO FISH

One hundred and twenty-six species of fish live in the waters of Ontario, according to a report just issued by the Royal Ontario Museum. Many of these, of course, are of no popular interest because of their small size, but even the smallest serve as food for some of the larger sorts. There is a great difference in the number of species found in the south as compared with the north. For instance, more than ninety species are recorded from Lake Erie, whereas a party from the Museum found fewer than thirty in Lake Attawapiskat in the Patricia District.

MUSEUM HOURS

When in Toronto you will find the Museum open free from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, and on Sundays from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. As a war measure it is closed on Mondays. There is a 15c. admission charge on Wednesdays and Fridays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m

SEA FOOD SAGA

Many of the well-known sea-foods, including the oyster and scallop, flourished long before man was here to appreciate them. The fossilized remains of these shell-fish occupy a conspicuous place in the vast and varied collections of the Royal Ontario Museum.

The scallop, like the oyster, belongs to the group of molluscs known as "bi-valves", a name which has reference to the two shells which enclose and protect the soft animal. The mode of life of these two creatures is very different. The sedentary oyster is fastened to rocks or other objects in near-shore areas. The active scallop swims freely in coastal marine waters as deep as two hundred fathoms or more. Its power of movement is seated in a single muscle that closes the shells. This hard-worked muscle is the part we eat—the white and tender bit which tastes somewhat like lobster meat. The other soft parts within the shell we cast away. Strange though it may seem, the inactive oyster has so tough a muscle that we discard it, but regard the remainder as a delicious morsel.

Unlike the oyster, the scallop is in season the year round. Many species are known and are widely distributed. Multitudes of individual scallops assemble in restricted areas to form "scallop banks" from which they are dredged. Two species in particular frequent Atlantic waters, notably from Labrador to Cape Cod. Nova Scotia waters, especially those in the Bay of Fundy, provide quantities of scallops for markets in Canada and elsewhere.

AUTUMN MOTH MADE TO MATCH

Everyone knows how effectively gay-winged butterflies and moths add their touch of harmonious colour to gardens and fields in summer. But when autumn comes, with its riot of rich and gaudy hues, the insect world seems overwhelmed and surpassed. However, there is at least one moth found in Southern Ontario which comes into its own at this season. Mr. C. E. Corfe, entomologist of the Royal Ontario Museum, says that the Notched-wing Moth is well designed to blend with the colours of an October landscape. This moth has scalloped wings with a spread of about two inches. They are rich buff in colour with russet trimmings. The larva, a "measuring worm", has fed on the leaves of maple and birch during the summer. Finally it spins a dense spindle-shaped cocoon within a cluster of leaves. After a brief rest in the pupa stage, it enacts that wonder of the insect world—the slow, looping larva is transformed into the active winged adult. Like most moths, it flies at night but, if you look sharply this autumn, you may find the Notch-wing among the tinted leaves that decorate the countryside.

WILL BROADCAST TO SCHOOLS

This fall the Royal Ontario Museum is collaborating with the Department of Education and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in a series of five broadcasts to the schools of the province, beginning Tuesday, October 10th, at 10 a.m., and for the four Tuesdays following. The title of the series will be "The Saga of the Pioneers."